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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 002708

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: ASD FLORY'S VISIT TO THE HAGUE

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires Chat Blakeman,  
reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: During his September 30 visit to The Hague, ASD Peter Flory met with Lo Casteleijn, MOD Director for General Policy Affairs, and Pieter de Gooijer, MFA Deputy Director General for Political Affairs, to discuss Afghanistan, the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, Kosovo, and NATO reform. Dutch officials made clear that finding a partner to team with in Uruzghan province was a pre-condition necessary to obtain Dutch government and parliament approval of Dutch participation in ISAF Stage III. They still hope to team with Australia, and will send a high-level delegation to Canberra in the coming weeks to make the case to the Australian government. Dutch officials also were supportive of the U.S. proposed "two summit" strategy, but pushed back on the concept that the 2008 summit focus on enlargement. While it was important to encourage aspirants such as Ukraine to take the reforms necessary for NATO membership, the Dutch expressed doubts that Ukraine and others would be ready by 2008. ASD Flory also visited the HMS Van Amstel, which returned to the Netherlands following its deployment to assist hurricane relief efforts in the Biloxi region. ASD Flory thanked the Van Amstel's crew for their hard work, and fielded questions from the press. End summary.

Australian Partnership a Must for Afghanistan

2. (C) De Gooijer and Casteleijn both stressed the strong Dutch interest in partnering with Australia in a PRT for Uruzghan province in ISAF Stage III. According to de Gooijer, this was a "political requirement" that would allow the Dutch government to present a convincing package to parliament. While the Australian forces would provide useful operational capabilities, he added, the forces driving the Dutch to find a reliable partner were primarily political. Asked by Flory whether the Dutch were considering any alternatives to Australia, de Gooijer emphasized that they were not. Noting that the Dutch cabinet hoped to be able to make a decision on the deployment in early November, de Gooijer asked the U.S. to weigh in with the Australians. Horbach added that the Dutch were looking at providing 1,000-1,200 troops themselves and supplementing this force with roughly 200 Australians. Horbach and de Gooijer confirmed that the Dutch expected Uruzghan to be a tough security environment and therefore supported robust ISAF rules of engagement.

3. (C) In the meeting at MOD, Casteleijn reiterated that partnering with Australia was a vital pre-condition to Stage III participation. Even with 200 Australian troops, Casteleijn said, the Dutch would still be working with far fewer troops than the UK or Canada, who are working on 2,000-3,000 man PRTs. The Dutch parliament, however, had explicitly limited the Dutch contribution to no more than 1,000-1,200 troops. Casteleijn said the Dutch planned to send a high level Dutch delegation to Canberra in the coming weeks to make the case to the Australian government. He added that the Australians have questions regarding their specific role in the PRT and the rules of engagement; the delegation to Canberra will seek to explain Dutch plans for an Australian contribution. It was important to explain to the Australians that the rules of engagement question was a NATO issue currently under discussion, and not a bilateral issue, Casteleijn said.

4. (C) Casteleijn noted that the Afghan elections appeared to have gone well; now it was important to revitalize the Bonn Process. The security situation in the south, he added, was particularly worrisome. ASD Flory took issue with Casteleijn's negative security assessment, describing recent incidents as negative spikes in an increasingly positive security situation. The elections were a great success; the Taliban chose not to disrupt the popular elections because the Afghan people overwhelmingly supported the electoral process. Of course, bad guys will continue to try and turn up the heat, but they are losing the strategic battle, Flory said. ASD Flory noted that the USG was aware that cost sharing for the renovation at Kandahar airport remained an issue for the Dutch. He asked if the Dutch required any logistics assistance. Casteleijn said they had approached Belgium regarding C-130 lift assistance, and have discussed extending the Belgian F-16 presence in Kabul into 2006. He added that intelligence sharing would be helpful.

15. (C) Casteleijn also reviewed plans to handover the Dutch PRT in Baghlan to Hungary. He described the Hungarians as "very eager" to take over, even before the planned transition in October 2006 and have hinted at perhaps "going somewhere else". Moreover, the Hungarians would like to make public announcements regarding the transition, which strikes the Dutch as "too early," Casteleijn said. He explained that Dutch development agencies have finally received funding for work in Baghlan; Hungarian announcements of a takeover would raise questions in parliament why funds had been allocated if the Dutch plan to leave.

#### Keeping ISAF and OEF Forces Separate

16. (C) Casteleijn said that the Dutch support a strict separation of ISAF and OEF forces, but added that the Dutch can support the recent U.S. proposal regarding interaction between the two. He explained that the Dutch require the separation for domestic political reasons. Any new deployment in Afghanistan will carry over past the 2007 national elections. The opposition Labor Party (PvdA) had opposed the deployment of Dutch special forces in support of OEF, Casteleijn said. Recent polls suggest that the 2007 elections will lead to a new government, perhaps under Labor leadership. A deployment under ISAF auspices, Casteleijn said, will not be contentious and therefore not subject to review. De Gooijer confirmed that parliament was unlikely to accept another Dutch OEF deployment "on the ground" (as opposed to at sea); this would be, he said, "a bridge too far" for the PvdA. On the other hand, he agreed that the latest U.S. proposal for improving coordination between the two missions was acceptable to the Dutch, as long as the two operations remained distinguishable to some degree.

#### NTM-I

17. (C) Casteleijn reviewed Dutch participation in the NATO Training Mission in Iraq. The Dutch are willing in principle to increase their contribution toward the mission up to 100 personnel assuming other nations make proportional increases. He said that the Dutch are committed to working in Iraq, but questioned whether a training mission outside Iraq -- such as in Jordan -- might be more effective. ASD Flory briefed on recent developments with the Iraqi constitution, and efforts to combat foreign fighters, especially those crossing the border from Syria. He described Iran and Syria as particularly troublesome. On a potential training mission outside Iraq, Flory said we should not discourage nations from participating in Iraq and described NTM-I as critical. He welcomed Dutch willingness to participate in any additional training mission as long as it does not detract from efforts in Iraq.

18. (C) De Gooijer similarly stressed the continuing Dutch commitment to NTM-I. The fact that the Dutch no longer had troops on the ground in Southern Iraq, he said, did not lessen the Dutch political commitment to the Iraq mission. He noted that, in addition to participating in NTM-I, the Dutch were playing an active role in EU programs for Iraq, including providing training to Iraqi jurists.

#### Kosovo/Bosnia

19. (C) In the meeting with Casteleijn, OSD Principal Director for European and NATO Policy Jim Townsend related discussions in London, noting a real sense of concern regarding where the international community is heading on final status talks and the impacts Kosovo independence might have on other efforts in the region by break-away provinces to win independence. Casteleijn agreed, adding that it was difficult to predict where a "stuck" final status discussion will go. He said there were difficult discussions going on in the MFA at present, and suggested that the Dutch government was looking to decrease troop levels in Bosnia. He explained that the Dutch believe that their troops are being asked to perform tasks that are better suited for police.

#### NATO Reform/Enlargement/Response Force

10. (C) Flory and Townsend briefly reviewed the USG two summit strategy for NATO-- a 2006 mini-summit focusing on transformation and capabilities, and a 2008 enlargement summit -- for de Gooijer and Casteleijn. Both expressed significant reservations about labeling the proposed 2008 NATO summit an "enlargement" summit. De Gooijer said the Dutch were comfortable with two summits and agreed on the need to make NATO more effective and efficient. But, he said, Europe was already suffering from "enlargement" fatigue, which was a significant factor in the Dutch "no" vote on the EU's Constitutional Treaty. The Dutch public and parliament, he stressed, were not psychologically prepared to

consider enlarging NATO at this time, especially with regard to a large, problematic state like Ukraine.

11. (C) Flory asked de Gooijer to clarify what, exactly, worried the Dutch about Ukraine. De Gooijer responded that, while Ukrainian capabilities would be a welcome addition to NATO in practical terms, there were many other factors arguing against admission. These included the possible impact on European relations with Russia, Ukraine's underdeveloped political system and rampant corruption, and the wide-spread perception -- right or wrong -- that admission to NATO was somehow linked to accession to the EU. The transatlantic alliance, he continued, should first develop a clearer view of its identity and future before enlarging further.

12. (C) Casteleijn said that the Dutch recognize Ukraine's strategic importance. However, labeling the 2008 summit as an enlargement summit will only raise expectations of aspirant countries, and there are too many questions regarding Ukraine's ability to take necessary reforms required for NATO membership. On Georgia, Casteleijn said that the Dutch were concerned about corruption and military-to-military cooperation development. Casteleijn suggested that the 2008 summit focus on defining or enhancing relationships between Partners and NATO, instead of an explicit commitment to enlargement.

13. (C) De Gooijer warned that it would be difficult to achieve real transformation at a 2006 summit if people believe the summit's real purpose is to pave the way for enlargement in 2008; managing perceptions to avoid this outcome should be a high priority, he said. Pressed to identify a country which might be ready for admission to NATO by 2008, de Gooijer offered that Croatia was probably the most likely candidate, but stressed that any discussion of enlargement, particularly with reference to a "package" of aspirants, would be sensitive in the current political climate.

14. (C) ASD Flory said that the 2008 summit could be better defined to "take stock" of NATO's relations with aspirants. While it was important not to create unwarranted expectations, however, it was also important to use the enlargement concept as a catalyst to create pressure to undertake necessary reform, Flory said. He emphasized that Ukraine has still a long way to go; much will depend on reform progress. He also mentioned reform efforts in Georgia and Turkish EU membership as contributing factors.

15. (C) Asked by de Gooijer to outline possible "deliverables" for the 2006 transformation summit, Flory and Townsend noted making the NRF operational and increasing its capabilities (perhaps through enhanced participation of Special Operations Forces) would be a high priority. Townsend also made a pitch to think creatively about methods to reform the NATO budget beyond "passing the tin cup". De Gooijer agreed that the 2006 summit should focus on "doing what we do now, but better" and exploring new financing and operational concepts. Casteleijn briefly outlined Dutch thinking on the NATO Response Force. Previously, the Dutch were more inclined to agree with France on limited NRF use. Now, the Dutch agree that the NRF should be used more frequently. Casteleijn said Defense Minister Kamp hopefully made this clear at the informal defense ministerial in Berlin.

16. (U) ASD Flory did not have an opportunity to review this message.

BLAKEMAN